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SUBJECT: UNSC: APRIL MIDDLE EAST BRIEFING

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: In the monthly briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, U/SYG Lynn Pascoe welcomed recent diplomatic developments and expressed concern over the recent escalation of violence in the West Bank and Gaza. Pascoe also announced the resignation of UNSCO Alvaro de Soto. Delegations praised renewed diplomatic activity, including efforts to revive the Arab Peace Initiative, but expressed concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories. Several EU delegations called for the easing of financial restrictions on the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the resumption of limited contact. On Lebanon, most delegations called for implementation of UNSCR 1701. Russia warned the international community should not apply "unwarranted pressure," and China also cautioned against "excessive pressure." The Palestinian representative accused Israel of being an insincere partner for peace; the Israeli PermRep lamented the Palestinian's failure to stop rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza against Israel. The Syrian representative denied Syria's involvement in arms smuggling to Lebanon. END SUMMARY.

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Pascoe Briefs on Diplomatic  
Developments, Escalating Violence  
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¶2. (U) In his first briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East since his appointment as U/SYG for Political Affairs, Pascoe highlighted the Arab League efforts to revive the Arab Peace Initiative, welcomed the April 15 meeting between President Abbas and PM Olmert in Jerusalem, and expressed concern about deteriorating security conditions in the Palestinian territories. Pascoe called on President Abbas and PM Olmert to build on the success of their discussions in Jerusalem. Pascoe also praised the diplomatic engagement of the Arab League and their efforts to revive the Arab Peace Initiative (API). Lastly, Pascoe called the recent escalation of violence in the West Bank and Gaza a "matter of great concern." He reported that UNSCO Alvaro de Soto is departing the UN after 25 years of service.

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Council Members Praise API and  
PA-GOI Contacts  
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¶3. (U) Delegations welcomed renewed diplomatic activity, praising both the Quartet and the Arab League. Several delegations focused their comments on the April 15 meeting between President Abbas and PM Olmert. China described the meeting as a positive development and a sign of "easing tensions." The UK noted the meeting and encouraged the

continuation of dialogue between the two sides. South Africa, Congo, and Ghana called for further dialogue and "confidence building measures" to move discussions forward.

¶4. (U) France, UK, South Africa, Belgium and Russia welcomed the revival of the API. France called the API an "essential basis for the solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict." Russia also urged the resumption of Israeli-Syrian dialogue. South Africa called on the Security Council to initiate direct contact with the Arab League follow-up committee. Indonesia called for a stronger UN role in resolving the conflict.

¶5. (U) Ambassador Wolff delivered the U.S. statement, describing developments in the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian track and calling upon Syria and Iran to abide by their obligations under UNSC resolutions.

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Humanitarian Situation,  
Financial Pressure on the PA  
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¶6. (U) Council members urged action to address the dire humanitarian situation in the West Bank and Gaza. South Africa leveled a harsh criticism at the Quartet: "The international community should pause to reflect on a situation where a crippling sanctions regime freezing Palestinian funding that was not authorized by Security Council or the General Assembly has been imposed on only one party to a dispute." Qatar expressed similar sentiments, arguing that the logical outcome of "sustained despair is more hatred and violence." Several of the EU member states urged the Quartet to ease financial restrictions on the PA and resume contact with members of the NUG that adhere to the Quartet principles. France called for a resumption of direct

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financial support for the PA Ministry of Finance and called on Israel to release withheld taxes and revenues, a request echoed by Belgium. Slovakia expressed support for an extension of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM). The UK said that it would judge the NUG by its "platform and actions."

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Lebanon  
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¶7. (U) Both Russia and China argued that the Lebanese needed to reach national consensus and warned against outside pressure from the international community. In regard to the Tribunal, Italy said the international community needed to be "aware" of the potential implications of a more active role by the Council. South Africa, Indonesia, Qatar and Congo called for Israel to stop over flights of Lebanese airspace. The Indonesian representative also welcomed "President Assad's assurances of Syria's cooperation with the UN in all matters relating to peace and security in the Middle East."

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Statements by Israel and Arab states  
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¶8. (U) The Palestinian representative Riyadh Mansour delivered a lengthy statement, arguing "While everyone else talks of peace, Israeli's colonization campaign continues, its military aggression on the Palestinian civilian population continues, its collective punishment of the Palestinian people as a whole continues." Israeli PermRep Gillerman criticized Mansour for failing to acknowledge continuing Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks on Israel from Gaza, and dismissed his statement as "deja vu all over again." The Syrian representative took issue with Council statements expressing concern about Syrian arms smuggling to Hizballah, describing them as "false claims" and citing denials by Lebanese authorities, including the Defense

Minister.

WOLFF